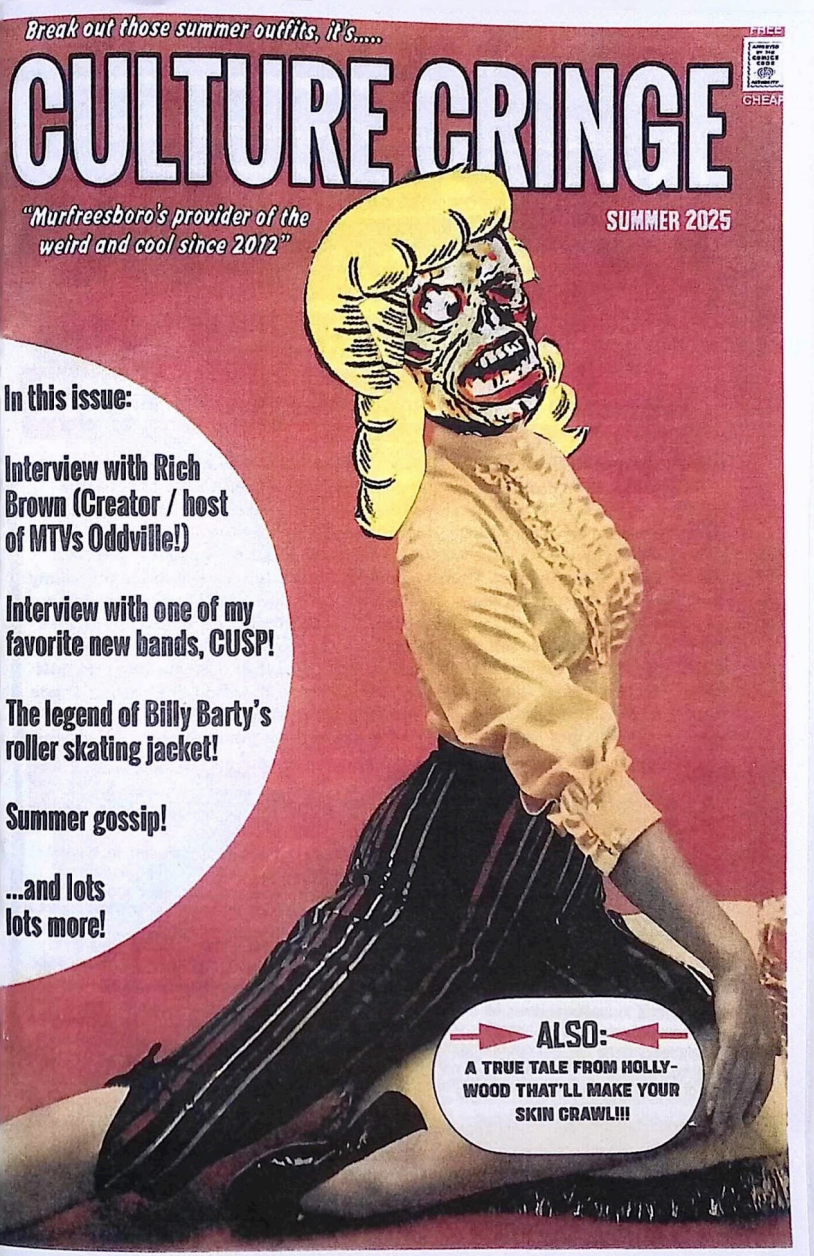
Break out those summer outfits, it's....
CULTURE CRINGE
"Murfreesboro's provider of the weird and cool since 2012"
SUMMER 2025
In this issue:
Interview with Rich Brown (Creator / host of MTVs Oddville!)
Interview with one of my favorite new bands, CUSP!
The legend of Billy Barty's roller skating jacket!
Summer gossip!
...and lots lots more!
ALSO:
A TRUE TALE FROM HOLLY-WOOD THAT'LL MAKE YOUR SKIN CRAWL!!!

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SUMMER GOSSIP SUMMER GOSSIP SUMMER GOSSIP SUMMER GOSSIP

CONTRARY TO THE HEADLINE ON THE COVER, WE AT CULTURE CRINGE ARE PLEASED TO REPORT THAT THERE IS **NO** SUMMER GOSSIP AS OF THE DATE OF THE PRINTING OF THIS ZINE. CHECK BACK TO THIS PAGE THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER FOR ~~UPADATES~~ UPDATES AS IF SUCH GOSSIP SHOULD ARISE, THEY WILL APPEAR HERE FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. THANK YOU!!!!!!

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A FEW WORDS FROM THE EDITOR / CREATOR / PUBLISHER / ARTIST / WRITER / ETC.

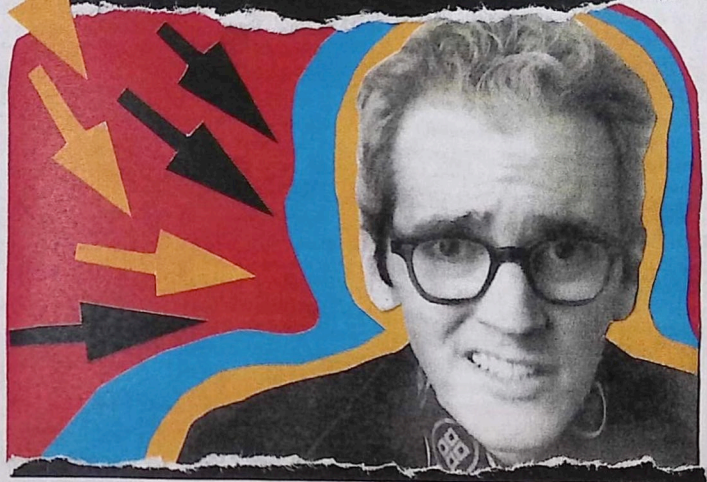
In part of my ongoing selfcare routine, I have been working on being present mentally and physically in everything I take part in - and that includes this issue of CULTURE CRINGE. While I have made issues in the past where I can say I wasn't entirely "present" during it's creation, I am making adjustments and taking steps to correct that. The universe is aligning! As a reader, you are deserving of only the best. That being said, I think that this issue is one of my favorite yet - it's right up there with the spring edition and the Molly Nilsson interview. By the way, thanks so much for all the feedback on that one. That means a lot and shows me that you are present as well! Although I truly kinda hate summer, I remained present and made the best of it by making this FUN issue. I would like to encourage everyone to place it flat on the bottom of one of your dresser drawers, that way you can discover it years from now while going through old clothes and say "wow, that was a great issue." xoxoxoxoxo

A FASCINATING, TOTALLY ABSURD HOLLYWOOD TALE!!!!

I've decided, against better judgment from my legal team, to share a story from deep within the archives. In 2002 I went to LA for the first time and upon arriving, we were immediately taken to a bar called **The Standard** by our contact. We didn't belong there, but well, there we were. It was on like a Tuesday night (the *lamest* night of the week, FYI), and there wasn't really anyone else there except us and a couple of people at the bar. Suddenly, I kid you not, in walks **LARRY FINE AND GILBERT GOTTFRIED!!!** Just kidding. Larry Fine passed away in '75. But for real it was **Hugh Hefner** and his SEVEN girlfriends. Ugh.....what? Yeah. Totally weird. NOW. The purpose of me telling this story is to inform you what around an hour after their arrival, I had to go the bathroom. So I went, as one does. Right after I went in, the door opened behind me. It was Hef and his 6'5" bodyguard. I was unfazed. I honestly was like....so what?? **WELL.** As I did my business, Mr. Hef went up to do his, and his bodyguard stood between us - with his back to Hef and while **staring** at me. I was like.....OK, what do you think I'm gonna do?? Needless to say I finished rather quickly and made my way back out. Upon exciting I saw my friends were all staring at me with their eyes wide open, laughing, etc. They were like.....**DUDE**. Did you talk to him? I said NO, *but I peed next to him.* **THEY DIED**. So for the rest of that trip I was known (and introduced) as Ben, the guy who used the bathroom right next to Hugh Hefner.

STRANGE.....BUT TRUE!!! SHOCKING!!! UNREAL!!! UNIMAGINABLE!!!

A SUPER FUN INTERVIEW WITH THE AMAZINGLY COOL RICH BROWN!!



Rich Brown (who went by the stage name **Frank Hope**) was the creator and host of the LEGENDARY NYC public access TV show **Beyond Vaudeville**, which ran from 1986 till 1996. If you've never seen it, head thee right away to the land of **Youtube** and check out the Beyond Vaudeville channel, which has all the old episodes. They should seriously be preserved in the **Library of Congress**. Anyways, in 1997 **MTV** came calling and the Beyond Vaudeville crew created **Oddville**, which was similar to the cable access show....but crafted more for the MTV generation with the addition of current celebrity guests and buzz bin rock bands. Oddville produced 66 episodes (and most of those are on the Youtube channel as well) and they are a real pleasure to watch in this day and age. I was thrilled to be able to ask Rich a few questions.....so.....

HERE.....WE.....GO!!!

CC: When making the episodes of Beyond Vaudeville, how did you manage to land such iconic guests (like Al Lewis, Sammy Petrillo, Joe Franklin, and Imogene Coca, to name a few) on a public access show? When I watch the episodes you've uploaded to YouTube, I'm consistently amazed at the legends you had on as guests!

RICH: Believe it or not, a lot of the guests we booked on Beyond Vaudeville were actually listed in the New York phonebook! Once we got through to them, I think they were flattered that we remembered them and admired them and knew so much about their careers. And there was a great snowball effect in being able to tell them all the other guests who had been on the show. While they might not have been familiar with the show, I think once they heard that list there was sort of a safety in numbers thing on our side. A feeling of, well, if THEY did it, it must be ok! I'm so proud of the many legendary people we managed to get on the show and whose interviews are now preserved in the Beyond Vaudeville archive. Not just the many show business legends but also memorable New York City eccentrics like Uncle Sam Joe Erdelyi Jr. and Herbert Stempel from the 1950s quiz show scandal.

CC: Looking back on Beyond Vaudeville, was there a particular guest (or guests) that you really wanted to get on the show who for some reason or another didn't work out and never made it on? Anyone who you just couldn't make contact with that you wish you could have?

RICH: There's a very long list of guests we tried to get on Beyond Vaudeville that we weren't able to book. New York City at the time had very robust newspaper tabloids that would give all kinds of leads on who was in town and we'd chase after people all the time. The frustrating ones would be people like 1960s TV horror host Zacherle or Stephen Strimpell from the short-lived TV series Mr. Terrific or minor Bilko character actor Mickey Freeman or Arnold Stang or even Soupy Sales who we thought would be gettable and who we would connect with only to find they wouldn't come on the show. If it were someone with nostalgic entertainment value living in New York City, chances are we did our best to reach out to them and try to get them on the show.

Rich interviewing Bobby "Boris" Pickett on Beyond Vaudeville!!

Rich Brown AKA Frank Hope in action!!

CC: When it comes to Oddville - thanks so much for your efforts in archiving those episodes for us to enjoy these days on YouTube. I'm curious as to how much personal input you had in the guest selection for that show? I know that some of your more popular guests from the public access days made a return appearance on Oddville, but I suspect MTV chose the musical guests and stuff like that?

RICH: The celebrity guests and the musical guests on Oddville were booked by the MTV talent and music departments. Which was fine by all of us who had worked on Beyond Vaudeville because we were extremely busy trying to find all the other guests who appeared on Oddville. We were swamped because every episode had about 5 guests outside of the celebrity and band, we had no budget to fly anyone in, and we had to shoot all 66 episodes in a very short period of time. We tried to book on Oddville as many Beyond Vaudeville guests as we could track down and who were available. Sadly, Beyond Vaudeville regular Trayman was scheduled to appear on Oddville and died before the taping. We ended up putting a tribute card to him in the closing credits of the show that he was scheduled to appear on.

GUIDED BY VOICES playing on Oddville!!

Bettie Serveert playing on Oddville!!

CC: BONUS QUESTION! Were the guests on both Beyond Vaudeville and Oddville told in advance that Joey the Monkey was gonna come out at the end of the show and dance, or were they usually blindsided by his appearance??

RICH: Beyond Vaudeville guests were only told during the booking process that it was a talk and variety show. Unless they themselves checked out the show ahead of time, they had no idea that a giant dancing monkey would eventually make his way to the set!

Fred Willard on the set of Beyond Vaudeville!!

The guests dancing to the band on Oddville!!

CONTINUED.....

THANKS SO MUCH to Rich Brown for the interview. And once again I'd like to encourage everyone to check out the episodes of Beyond Vaudeville and MTV's Oddville - all on Youtube. For my younger readers who REALLY want to know what the vibe of the 90s was like - definitely check out Oddville. It really captures it. There's something about how at the end of the episodes all the guests get up and dance to the band - everyone has a fun positive carefree vibe about them. And for those out there who love entertainment history and old school personalities, Beyond Vaudeville is a TREASURE. I am super super thankful that all of these are available for us to stream. Thanks Rich!

The cast of MTV's Oddville. From left to right: David Greene, Frank Hope, and Melissa Gabriel

Background: Joey The Monkey!!

END.

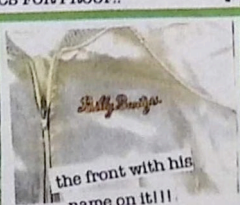
INTERMISSION TIME

THE TRUE TALE OF BILLY BARTY'S ROLLER SKATING JACKET!!!

EARLIER THIS YEAR I WAS LUCKY TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE A SATIN JACKET THAT ONCE BELONGED TO BILLY BARTY. ON THE BACK, IT HAS THE LOGO FOR THE ROLLER SKATING RINK THAT HE OWNED IN THE LATE 70S / EARLY 80S....BILLY BARTY'S ROLLER FANTASY! THAT ROLLER RINK IS LEGENDARY IN POP CULTURE BECAUSE IN THE 80S, THEY STARTED LETTING BANDS PLAY THERE....AND BANDS LIKE METALLICA, RATT, NEW ORDER, AND THE PLIMSOULS GRACED THE STAGE. I IMAGINE THAT BILLY WOULD WEAR THIS WHILE SKATING AROUND THE RINK. HOW COOL IS THAT? HERE ARE SOME PICS FOR PROOF..

me holding it for scale!!

the amazing back logo !!



the front with his name on it!!!

INTERVIEW WITH JEN BENDER OF THE CHICAGO BAND CUSP!!!

CUSP is a fantastic band from Chicago that I recently discovered, and I'm super excited that guitarist / singer Jenn agreed to answer some questions! I first heard them on a random shuffle and was like.....STOP THE PRESS WHO IS THAT?? I immediately ordered their album You Can Do It All. Fantastic stuff! They released a follow up EP last year called Thanks So Much - also all killer. I expect we will hear more out of them this year....follow them on their socials (cusptunes on instagram) and check out their bandcamp (cusptunes.bandcamp.com)! And now..

.....on with the interview.....

CC: I read that Cusp started out in Rochester, NY and then relocated to Chicago a few years ago. Was your debut full length You Can Do It All written and recorded after that move? Was it hard integrating into a whole new local scene?

CUSP: Almost all of YCDIA was written after we moved. I've found that writing comes easiest to me after a time of transition or change, usually after returning home from a trip or tour; and especially after moving halfway across the country to a major city. A few of the songs were written years beforehand, though. A Is an example, wrote Limited Edition a looooooong time ago - back before Cusp was even Cusp. It was surprisingly easy to find our footing out here, which I partly attribute to luck and partly attribute to my job. I work with a lot of musicians, so I was able to make friends with similar interests almost immediately. It's how we met Tommy and Tessa!

CC: I am notorious for not listening to vocals and lyrics when I listen to music. It's a bad habit of mine! However, the vocals and lyrics on Cusp songs really stick out to me and demand my attention. What I'm trying to say is that your recordings have REALLY good vocals....and lyrics! So Jen - I'm pretty curious as to who your inspirations were/are when it comes to your vocal style, and I'm also wondering who has ever inspired you lyrically.

Continued→

CUSP: (Thank you for your kind words!) As far as vocal style goes, I'm not 100% sure where the inspiration comes from. I'm a fan of so many different types of vocals. I trained as an opera singer in college, so I'm doing a complete 180 from the style I've been taught - but some of the ways I approach vocals have been forever influenced by a lifetime of music education. In particular, I was a major choir kid - so vocal harmonies are always top of mind for me. As for lyrics, I think of Adrianne Lenker, Emily Haines, and Sadie Dupuis when I'm asked about inspiration (to name a few). I like the idea of songs as poems, and I think of those writers when I think of poeticism and storytelling in song.

CC: OK I'll admit it, I've worn out your two EPs and your full length album already. Many many repeated listens. I gotta ask: will we get some new music from Cusp in 2025? Anything in the works you can tell us about?

CUSP: Yes, there will be new Cusp in 2025! I can't say too much yet, but I promise there are exciting things to come.

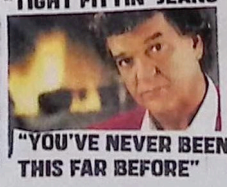
CC: Besides music, what are some hobbies / interests that you're into? Any weird or fun collections, obsessions, or fandoms? See, here at Culture Cringe, we ask the REAL hard hitting questions :)

CUSP: Gaelen, Matt and I are big into basketball. Living in Chicago that means we are unfortunately obligated to support the Bulls. But honestly it's just fun to watch all of the current stars in the league. We're big Jokic fans in our house.

As for obsessions, right now I'm really, REALLY into this game called Balatro. If anyone wants to talk about Balatro, please feel free to reach out to cusp_tunes on Instagram.

CC: Alright this might seem like a goofy question at first, but I swear the answer tells a lot. Let's say Cusp plays a show in somewhere like Minneapolis and you all decide to drive home all night after the gig. I wanna know what your go-to album or artist that you put on to listen to in order to keep yourself hyped up and awake! For example, I was in a band once and mine was Hot August Night by Neil Diamond...which I normally don't listen to unless I've had two cups of coffee and it's 4 am on the interstate - ha!

CUSP: This is a good one. A while back we drove out to play a show in Detroit and then drove back after (about 4.5 hours each way) and I distinctly remember listening to Silk Sonic at like 3AM as we were getting back into the city. Sometimes I gotta put on some Kelly Clarkson or something to make sure everyone's staying alert. Just some solid 2000s bangers. Sometimes I'll put some RXKNephew on. Just kind of a wildcard on the aux.

THANK YOU SO MUCH JEN AND CUSP!! GO CHECK OUT THEIR MUSIC

BONUS FREE COLLECTIBLE PIN UP IMAGES OF CONWAY TWITTY